

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 – The Judgment of Christ

I. Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

- A. 1-2 Thessalonians were, after Galatians, the first canonical letters of Paul (written appr. 50 AD) and, therefore, are among the earliest books in the New Testament.
- B. Paul writes 2 Thessalonians, shortly (probably several weeks or months) after 1 Thess. Apparently, the person who delivered 1 Thessalonians returns to Corinth to deliver a report on the church to Paul.
 1. Positively, Paul commends the church for their spiritual health despite persecution; also, Paul is no longer has to defend his apostleship (see 1 Thess 1-2
 2. Negatively, Paul want to correct false information about the Second Coming, and also deal more directly with the problem of idleness (not unemployed, but moochers!).



II. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 –

*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ:*

to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is
because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every
for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast*

*you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you
are enduring.*

*⁵ This is
evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which
you are also suffering-- ⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to
grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty
angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the
gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the
Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled
at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹ To this end we always pray for you,
that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by
his power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of
our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess 1:1-12)*

1. How does Paul's theology of Christians being "in Christ" come through in his thanksgiving to God for their deeds (vv. 3-4)?

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia (northern Greece), ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the

saints--⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."
(2 Cor 8:1-5)

2. How is the Thessalonians' perseverance through persecution "evidence of the righteous judgment of God" (v. 5)? What "judgment" is he talking about? How should this affect your view of the world?

"It is precisely the devout who with eager longing await the day in which God will glorify his name before the eyes of all creatures, and in their cause God brings about the triumph of his own over all opposition. And this desire becomes all the stronger as the blood that cries out for vengeance runs over the earth in wider and deeper streams, as injustice triumphs, as wickedness increases, as falsehood flourishes, and as Satan's domain expands and rises up against the realm of righteousness. All of history cries out for world judgment. The whole creation longs for it. All people witness to it. The martyrs in heaven cry out for it with a loud voice. The believing community prays for the coming of Christ. And Christ himself, the Alpha and the Omega, says: 'See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work' [Rev 22:12]" - Herman Ravinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:600

3. How should the coming judgment against ultimately unrepentant unbelief impact us personally (see Rom 12:17-21)?

"You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Ps 56:8)

"It is wrong to seek revenge on any man, because we are bidden to wish all men well. Then too, though we in a general way long to take vengeance on the wicked, yet since we do not as yet know who they are, we should desire the welfare of all." - John Calvin, Thessalonians, 317.

4. According to vv. 8-9 and the following verses, what will this judgment be like for unbelievers? How should we understand "separation" from the Lord, given that God is omnipresent?

"And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth."²⁰ In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats,²¹ to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth." (Is 2:19-21)

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan 12:2)

"... than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire." (Mark 9:43)

"...for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever." (Jude 6)

"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast." (Rev 14:11)

5. Why, specifically, do you think hell and judgment is dismissed by so many, including Christians? What can we do to hang on to its reality? What are the benefits of having a "high view" of hell?

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'--²⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles." (Gal 3:13-14)

“Unless we are stirred up to the hope of eternal life, the world will quickly draw us to itself... Let every one, therefore, that would persevere in a course of holy life, apply his whole mind to an expectation of Christ’s coming.” - John Calvin, *Thessalonians*, 246.